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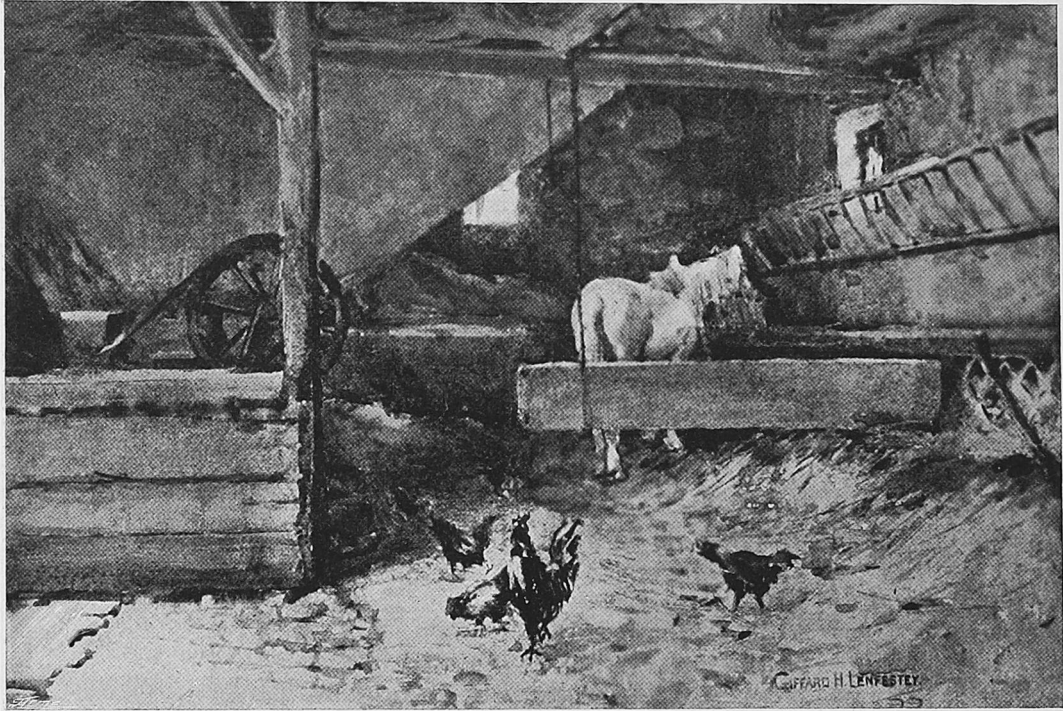
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THE BARN
BY G. LENFESTEY

given such pains to architectural drawing as has Mr. Lenfestey, and to say that some of his work closely approaches in care and skill to that of the late Lord Leighton, is to give to him a very remarkable praise but the praise is well merited.

A drawing of a staircase in Rouen Cathedral, reveals not alone the power to see the knowledge of construction, but the power to convey all this knowledge in a manner that is full of fine detail without losing the strength of the subject, and to many of his studies of Chartres the same praise may be given. He is an artist capable of taking pains, open to criticism, ready to learn, and with these qualities based upon considerable knowledge and skill and an experience far in excess of his years, we can predict for him a future full of noteworthy events and to be crowned with honour.

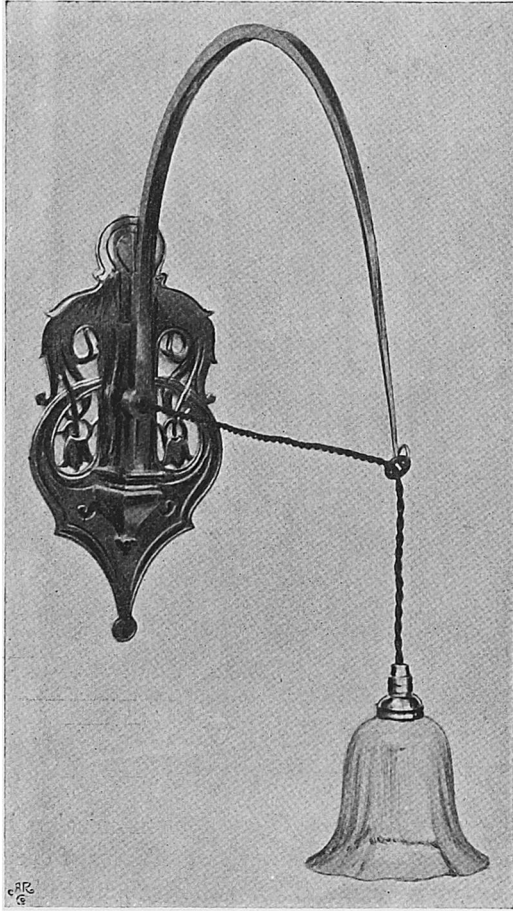
Quite recently Mr. Lenfestey has been on a sketching tour through Italy, whence he has returned with a vast number of water-colour drawings. Florence, Siena, and Venice have supplied him with the principal motives which are treated with rare force and unconventionality. He has studiously avoided to add to the appalling number of hackneyed Venetian scenes

with which the windows of picture dealers have been filled for so many years. Effects of evening and night on the Lido or the lagoons had more attraction for him than the familiar forms of the palazzi on the Canale Grande; but, although he has not yielded to the temptation of the bright, spotty, modern Italian palette, his distinctly personal views of the 'Queen of the Adriatic' are painted with irresistibly convincing truth to nature.

METAL WORK IN DOMESTIC DECORATION BY HUGH B. PHILPOTT

A FEW weeks ago I happened to be in the newly decorated smoking room of an important London club. The decorations had been carried out in elaborate and costly style, but the electroliers and electric light brackets were of the cheap, showy type one might expect to find in a middle-class suburban villa—poorly designed and fashioned in thin brass, every leaf of which had been stamped out by machinery in a Birmingham

METAL WORK IN THE MODERN HOUSE



BRASS ELECTRIC BRACKET
(Birmingham Guild of Handicraft)

factory. The case is mentioned because it is typical of the regard which is paid to decorative metal work in these enlightened and progressive days. Surely no other branch of furnishing and decoration is treated with such indifference. It is no unusual thing to find in a luxuriously furnished building, public or private, where wealth and taste have been freely lavished on furniture, pictures, carpets and draperies, that the lamps, fenders, fire-irons, and gas or electric light fittings are of this meretricious machine-made type. They have been chosen almost at random from a catalogue, or out of a show-room containing hundreds of similar articles, and it has probably not occurred to the owner or decorator that any other

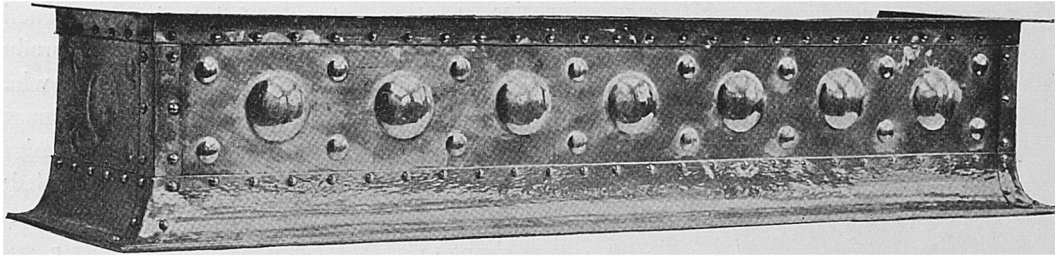
course was possible, while as for such minor fittings as door plates and bell pushes, scarcely any one thinks of them at all, and the furnishing ironmonger may supply just what he pleases, confident that one pattern will give precisely as much satisfaction as another. And so in many a well-considered decorative scheme the metal work comes as a note of discord to mar what would otherwise be a beautiful and harmonious whole.

Of course, it is machinery that is very largely responsible for this unsatisfactory state of affairs. From many standpoints there is much to be said for machinery; from the standpoint of art nothing at all. It has fettered the designer and almost eliminated the craftsman. So greatly has it cheapened production that handwork has scarcely a chance in competition with the products of the machine. No doubt there are plenty of people who would willingly pay the higher prices demanded for handwork, if they realised that such work had an unquestioned artistic superiority, or even—to such an extent are we the creatures of fashion—if they were persuaded that handwork is ‘the correct thing.’ But unfortunately at the present time the wealthy and those who are regarded as models



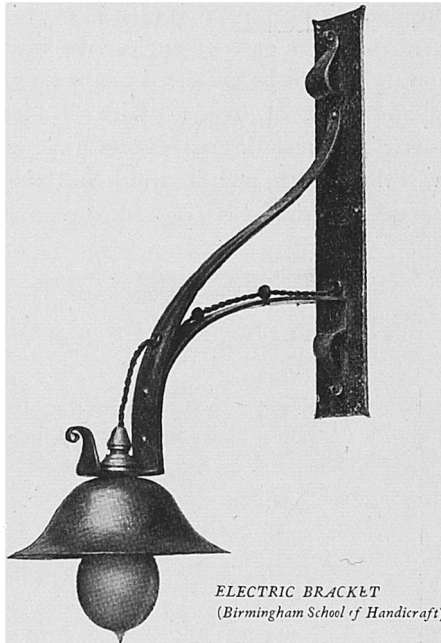
ELECTRIC PENDANT
IN HAMMERED BRONZE AND BRASS
(Birmingham Guild of Handicraft)

CO-OPERATION OF ARTIST AND CRAFTSMAN



COPPER FENDER
(Birmingham School of Handicraft)

of artistic propriety do not scruple to employ the machine-made metal work with which the market is flooded ; and so the genuine artist in metal, who designs to meet a special need, and works out his conception with hammer, chisel, and file, is employed only by a few artistic amateurs and some of the more discerning architects.



ELECTRIC BRACKET
(Birmingham School of Handicraft)

What seems to be chiefly lacking in our decorative ideals is a clearer recognition of the artistic value of harmony and of the interest imparted by the human factor. It should be the aim of the decorator to secure the sympathetic co-operation of every artist and craftsman concerned in the work ; the metal worker must subordinate his personal predilections to the harmony of the general scheme, and every detail of his work should have its place in the production of a harmonious and artistic whole. If wrought by hand it cannot fail to possess

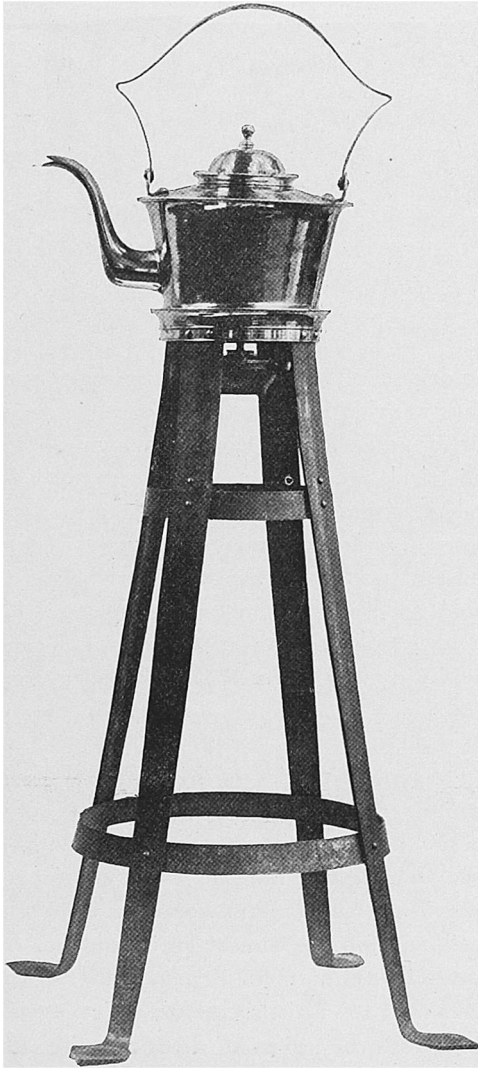
some degree of individuality, an almost human quality which goes far to atone even for poverty of design, and for the loss of which no mere geometrical accuracy can compensate. The metal vessel bearing on its surface innumerable hammer marks will suggest the joy of the craftsman as the stubborn material gradually yielded to his skill and approximated to the ideal he strove to realise, and will be cherished beyond the more perfectly shaped and glittering object which speaks only of the whirl of inanimate machines.

The great factories of Birmingham, which have for generations supplied the bulk of the domestic metal work of the civilised world, are chiefly responsible for the false standards of beauty in regard to metal work that everywhere prevail, and for the almost entire absence from ordinary houses of metal fittings that have any pretensions to artistic merit. Yet even in Birmingham the leaven of artistic righteousness.



BRASS SCUTTLE
(Birmingham School of Handicraft)

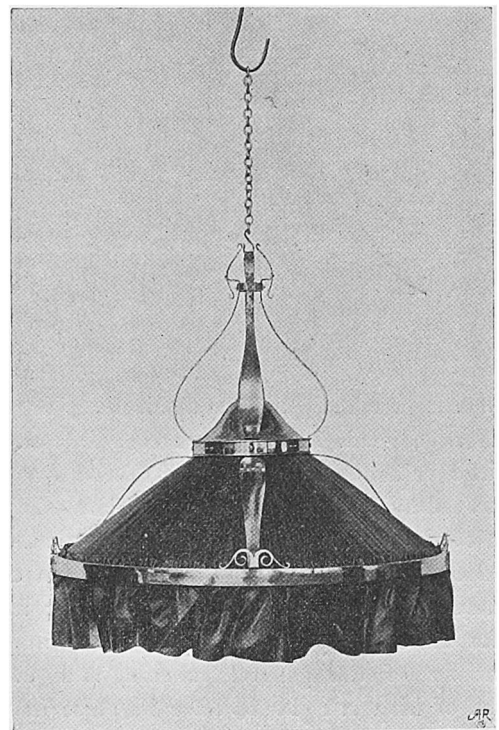
BIRMINGHAM METAL WORK



COPPER AND BRASS KETTLE
ON BRONZE STAND
(Birmingham School of Handicraft)

is at work. The Birmingham Guild of Handicraft and one or two individual makers are working on lines widely different from the prevalent factory system, and producing some good examples of handwork applied to the common metal fittings of a house. The Guild of Handicraft, though conducted on commercial lines, has managed to maintain a high artistic standard, and it is making a praiseworthy effort to train craftsmen imbued with a spirit of love for their work, with a sense of propriety of form and grace of line, a knowledge of their materials and a skill in manipulating them that cannot possibly belong to the 'hands' in the great wholesale factories. This work, carried on in the midst of the metal manufacturing district of

England, can hardly fail to have a beneficial effect on the whole trade. The work produced by the Guild is the very antithesis of what is usually understood by the term 'Brummagem.' Varying greatly in the quality of the design, it is always sincere and unaffected and carried out on sound lines. Most of the designs are severely simple, and some are characterised by a sturdy vigour contrasting pleasantly with the flimsy prettiness that seems to be the prevailing ideal of the manufacturers. A good effect is often produced by the juxtaposition of different metals. In the kettle and stand here illustrated, for instance, the body of the kettle is of hammered copper, the lid and the handle—which might with advantage have been a little more substantial—are of brass, and the sturdy, sensible stand is of bronze. The coal scuttle and fender are good pieces of hammered work well fitted for their purpose. The fender is of a type too seldom seen—a simple curb to enclose the hearth; this is every way to be preferred to the familiar flamboyant type of fender with its leaves and rosettes, its meaningless curves that writhe all over the hearth, and its numerous sharp points that seem designed as traps for the unwary.



ELECTRIC PENDANT
IN BRASS WITH SHADE

THE BIRMINGHAM 'GUILD'

It ought to be scarcely necessary to point out that all forms which even suggest danger or unfitness for the ostensible purpose of the object should be avoided. Yet this is constantly overlooked by designers and manufacturers in their efforts to attract the public by 'pretty' effects. Hence the top-heavy table lamps, which look as if a touch would overturn them, and the floor lamps with sharp-pointed scroll and leaf work about their bases, suggestive of a possible catastrophe if a lady's dress should get caught in them. A lamp is never quite satisfactory in design unless it looks, and actually is, almost impossible to upset.

In electric light fittings the Birmingham Guild have produced a variety of attractive designs. The hammered copper shades which they so freely employ are preferable, as a rule, to the fancy glass and the silk shades so generally used. It seems reasonable that a metal fitting, whether for oil, electricity, or any other illuminant, should be complete in itself, pleasing to the eye and able to fulfil its purpose without the addition of silk and lace. At any rate, there should be no room for doubt whether the shade is or is not needed; it too often happens that a lamp looks ugly and incomplete without the silk shade, yet when the latter is added it hides parts of the design which were obviously intended to be constantly in view, and are in fact needed to give

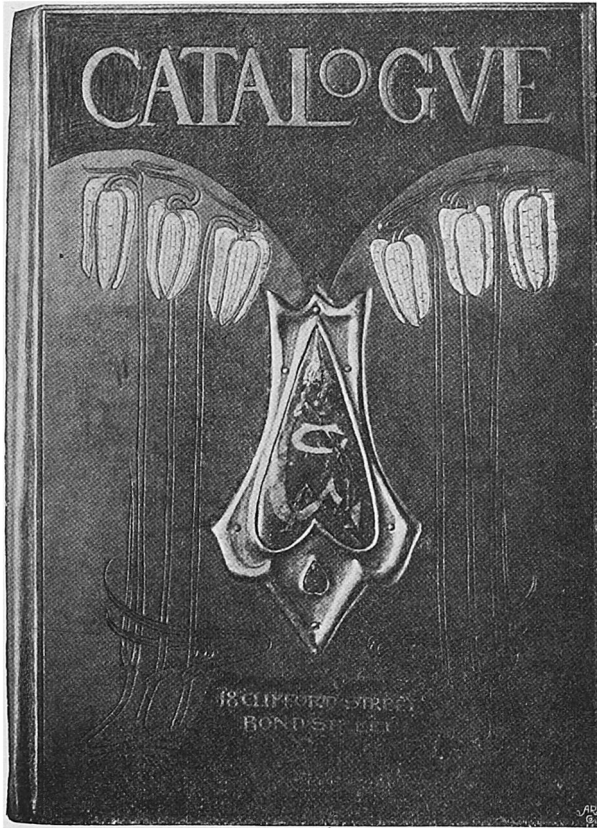
the object completeness and symmetry of form. A fitting whereof lace and silk form an integral and necessary part may be quite satisfactory, as in the case of the hanging electric light fitting by the Birmingham Guild illustrated on page 10; it is where there seems to be uncertainty and compromise between different forms that the results are unsatisfactory.

The introduction of electric lighting has increased enormously the opportunities of the designer of metal fittings. For electric light lends itself to every form of fitting that is adapted to any other illuminant, and to many more besides. There are, indeed, theorists who maintain that the source of the illuminant should be hidden, so that the light may flood the room in the same way as sunlight. But to cherish the illusion at midnight that the sun is shining is not the most reasonable attitude of mind. The light being necessarily artificial, there seems no justifiable reason for hiding its source; on the contrary, so important is the artificial illuminant, seeing that without it all business and pleasure must cease at sundown, that one can hardly pay it too high honour in the dignity and beauty of the fittings through which it is introduced. The decorator, therefore, whose artistic principles allow him to deal generously with the sources of artificial lighting has almost unrestricted opportunities for the display of inventive



PEWTER KETTLE AND BEAKER AND OLD PATTERN JUG
BY MRS STARKIE GARDNER

ART FOR THE KITCHEN



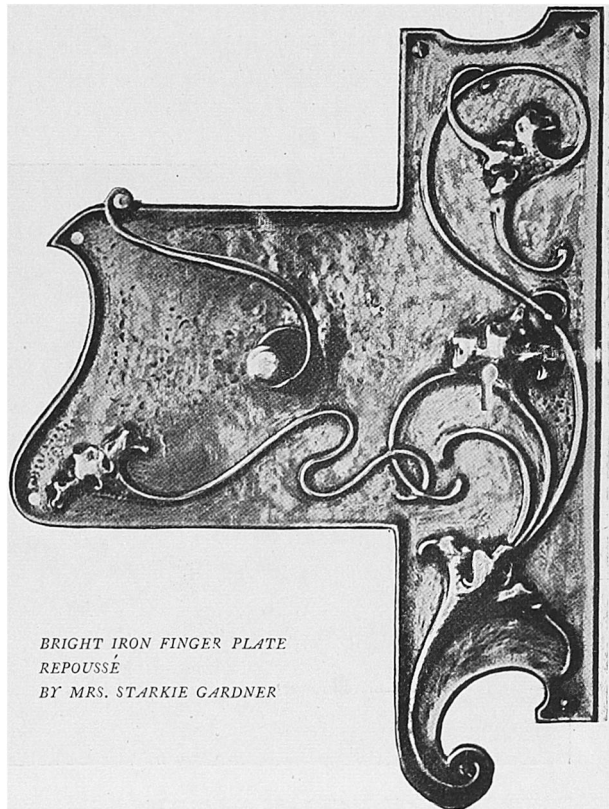
CATALOGUE IN LEATHER
WITH ENAMEL ON STEEL
BY MRS. STARKIE GARDNER

and artistic skill when electricity is the medium employed.

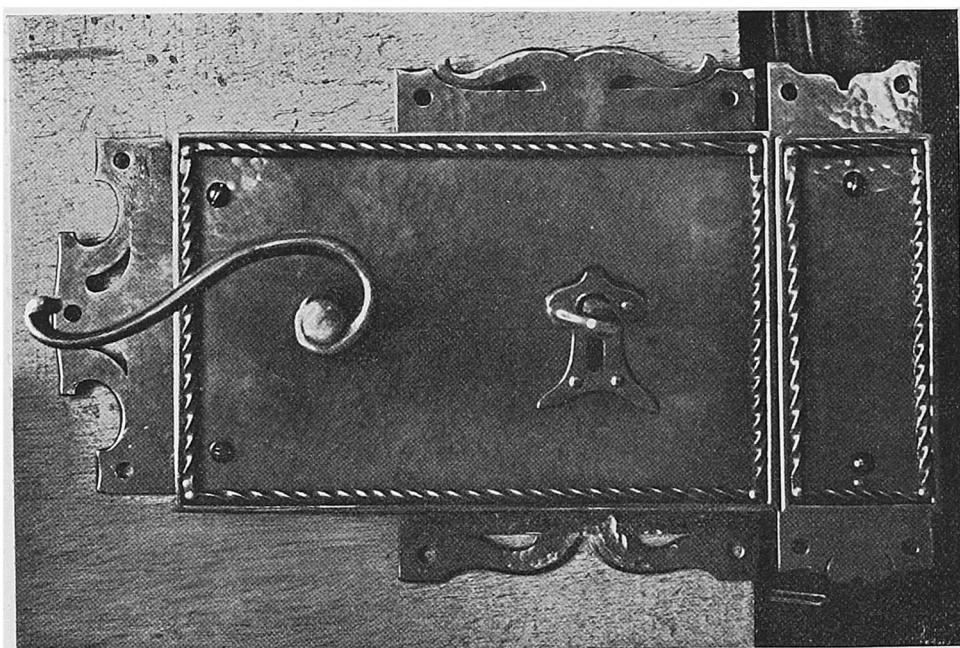
The Birmingham Guild of Handicraft have even taken some steps towards the beautifying of the common utensils of the kitchen. It may be doubted whether many people would be willing to go to the expense of hand-beaten copper or brass saucepans and kettles for the delectation of Mary Jane, and it is probable that the greater number of these kettles and pots are sold for occasional use in the drawing-room or dining-room. Still, it is undoubtedly right in principle to seek to give an artistic value even to the commonest articles of everyday use. In the greatest days of art beautiful objects were everywhere. When the appreciation of the beautiful was universal, ugly things simply did not exist, because no one would think of producing them. And no doubt a great revival of artistic sensibility would show itself in the kitchen as well as elsewhere. In fact, the

character of the ordinary furniture and essential fittings of a house forms a far more reliable gauge of the degree of artistic enlightenment possessed by its inmates than the pictures and other 'objects of art' it contains.

In this connection it is appropriate to refer to some praiseworthy work that is being done by Mrs. Gardner, of Clifford Street, W., who, with the help of one or two other lady workers, is producing some interesting examples of the lighter class of domestic metal work. This is a field of activity that we have hitherto been accustomed to regard as an essentially masculine one, but Mrs. Gardner and her fellow-workers seem to have entered it with considerable success, and we must now include art metal work among the crafts that are open to women of artistic talents. Especially worthy of attention are some of Mrs. Gardner's essays in the sadly neglected work of producing artistic door furniture. The modern fashion of concealing locks in the doors makes it unlikely that



BRIGHT IRON FINGER PLATE
REPOUSSE
BY MRS. STARKIE GARDNER



BRASS RIM LOCK
BY MRS. STARKIE GARDNER

we shall in these days rival the beautiful and elaborate work of the mediæval locksmiths, but we cannot believe that Mrs. Gardner is wrong in anticipating a very considerable demand for such simple and tasteful door fittings as the old-fashioned rim lock in beaten brass, of which we give an illustration. A door must have a lock, and it is an easy and comparatively inexpensive matter to treat it as a decorative feature. Yet how seldom is this done.

The same remark applies to finger plates, of which Mrs. Gardner has made some very pleasing examples. A finger plate exists for the simple purpose of preventing the fingers from soiling the paint of the door. Therefore an excessive elaboration seems hardly called for. But there is no reason why hammered plates of simple and artistic character should not be generally used. The flatness of their form makes them easy and attractive subjects for repoussé work, and it is indeed surprising that in this department, at any rate, the manufacturing ironmonger is not more generally superseded by the art metal worker, especially when it is seen that hammered plates of simple design can be supplied at very moderate prices.

In the shape of her door handles Mrs. Gardner departs from the conventional round knob, and

gives us some handles that at once win approval by the way in which they seem to fit the finger and thumb that grasp them, allowing the door to be opened by a very slight pressure. Why the round door knob is so ubiquitous it would be difficult to say ; it is certainly not the best form. There are many other interesting things besides door plates in Mrs. Gardner's show-rooms, but special attention is directed to her work in this direction because it meets a distinct want, and shows a way of escape from the really melancholy state of artistic degradation into which most of our doors have sunk.

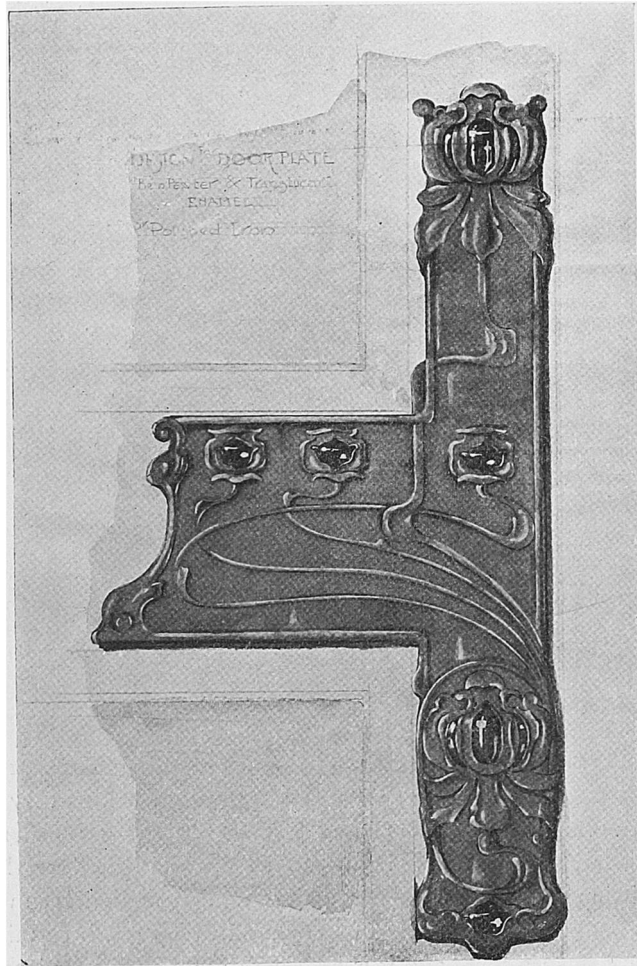
There is one direction in which art metal work has made considerable progress of late years, and has been applied with no little success ; that is, in the metal fittings of furniture. The conventional brass handles and escutcheons taken from an ironmonger's stock, and attached without consideration of their appropriateness to sideboards and cabinets, are giving way—and not before it was time—to more carefully considered and often specially designed fittings. Glass doors are protected and adorned by metal grilles and hinges which, instead of being hidden from view, are carried far across the doors of cupboards and given a distinctly decorative value. Sometimes, no doubt, the prominence of the metal fittings

METAL FITTINGS

is carried to absurd lengths, as when a writing cabinet is encircled by grim-looking steel bands, as though it were a strong box belonging to times when banks and iron safes were unknown. But, speaking generally, the modern custom—or, more strictly speaking, the revival of the ancient custom—of giving importance and prominence to the metal fittings, and treating them in a decorative manner, has had a distinctly beneficial effect on the quality of furniture designs.

The use of grilles, strap hinges and metal inlays, with a wider range of metals than has hitherto been used for furniture fittings, opens up a new and wide field in which the metal worker and the furniture designer may work together and produce results of genuine artistic value. A quaint fancy that has lately obtained considerable vogue is the inlaying in metal of mottoes more or less appropriate to the pieces of furniture they adorn. The lettering, if well done, certainly has a pleasing effect, but one can imagine that a man might get tired of being reminded every time he washes his hands that 'Cleanliness is next to godliness,' and that a lady would in time experience, and perhaps express, a feeling of irritation on being told every time she goes to her wardrobe that 'Fine feathers make fine birds.'

The tendency to widen the range of the metals used for furniture fittings is certainly a good one, as the metal that is appropriate to one



DOOR PLATE IN PEWTER
AND TRANSLUCENT ENAMEL, OR POLISHED IRON
BY MRS. STARKIE GARDNER

kind of furniture is not so to another. It is well to remember in metal work that the various metals and alloys have their own peculiar qualities, and are not to be indifferently interchanged. A lion rampant may be admirably depicted in brass, but would look tame and spiritless in pewter. On the other hand, bright brass fittings would completely spoil a dull oak sideboard, but pewter might give an excellent effect. One is glad to see signs of the growing popularity of pewter. Three hundred years ago it had an honourable place among the metals that were employed for

decorative purposes. Then it fell on evil days, and came to be regarded as only fit for the pots of the publican. An instance of the strength of this prejudice against pewter recently came to the writer's notice. A wholesale furniture maker of artistic proclivities ventured a few years ago to furnish an oak sideboard with pewter fittings. But the buyers of the retail dealers would have nothing to do with it, and all sorts of uncomplimentary remarks were made about it; at length the maker replaced the offending pewter fittings by copper ones, and the sideboard was sold at once.

Since then many experiments in the use of pewter have been made, and no doubt the tasteful and talented gentlemen who represent the retail furniture houses are beginning to reconcile themselves to the innovation. Apart from recent experiments there is plenty of ancient work

BENSON'S CABINET

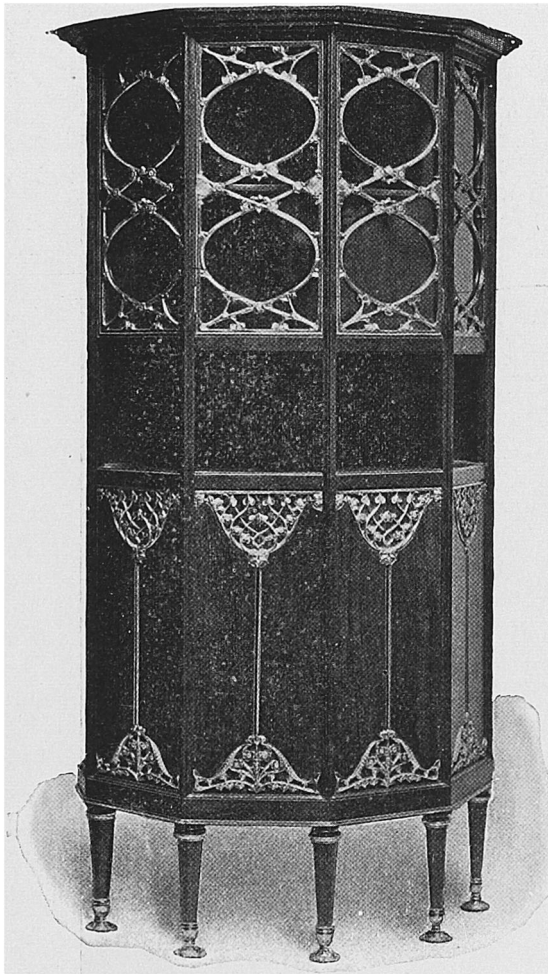
SIDEBOARD WITH METAL
HINGES AND INLAY.



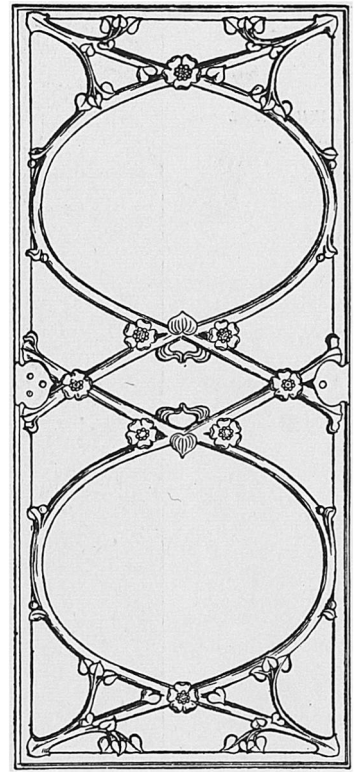
still extant that clearly indicates the great artistic possibilities of pewter.

One or two examples of the successful application of metal to furniture decoration are here illustrated. The sideboard is given as a typical rather than an exceptional piece of furniture; much of the best modern furniture is being designed more or less on these lines. Here we have an inlaid motto in copper, strap hinges, quiet in design but distinctly decorative, and handles which, while well suited for their purpose, also aid the decorative effect. The rosewood cabinet with the 'old silver' decoration belongs to a different class of work. Here the

metal work is more expressly ornamental; an enlarged sketch is given of the tracery of the doors which, as will be seen, is very graceful and beautiful. This cabinet, which was designed by Mr. W. A. S. Benson, was exhibited at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition of 1899, and attracted a good deal of attention. Probably no other designer has achieved so many striking and novel effects in the application of metal decoration to furniture. Not cabinets only, but mantelpieces and other interior fittings, have been decorated by the application of metal ornament. Sometimes the method is to emphasise the main constructional lines by means of metal strips, or



BENSON METAL WORK
ON A CABINET



TRACERY OF
CABINET DOOR

should be carefully considered so that it harmonises with its surroundings and has its own place in the decorative scheme. Not even a keyhole escutcheon or a finger plate should be regarded as a thing of no account.

an arcading of metal with delicately wrought tracery is placed upon the mirror. The result in Mr. Benson's hands is often admirable, but this method of decoration is one that needs to be applied with the greatest taste and reticence. In the hands of designers and makers of the baser sort applied ornamentation so easily becomes vulgar and flamboyant. It cannot be too strongly urged that a piece of furniture that is badly proportioned and intrinsically weak in design will never be made beautiful by any amount of applied ornament.

The great thing to remember in considering the metal work of a room or of a piece of furniture is that everything, large or small,

SASCHA SCHNEIDER, BY THE COUNT DE SOISSONS

'WHY did not Art go with you to the grave? When you closed your eyes, light for Art was also quenched,' exclaimed Vasari, exasperated at Raphael's death. Thus people exclaim, every time they see a change in the manifestation of human activity, to which they had become accustomed.

And in the meantime, humanity continues to live; splendid civilisations pass away, individuals and nations perish—but work and development